

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 ARA-10 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
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R 160633Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6261
INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 935

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PINR
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC: SOVIET AMBASSADOR RYKOV PAYS A COURTESY CALL

REF KIGALI 880 (NOTAL)

1. TEN DAYS AFTER ARRIVING IN KIGALI, NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO RWANDA, GUENNADY RYKOV, PAID A COURTESY CALL ON US JUNE 14. SINCE HIS ARRIVAL HERE SEEMS TO SIGNAL INCREASED SOVIET INTEREST IN RWANDA, WE ARE FORWARDING SOME BIO BITS BY CABLE AND REQUEST FURTHER INFO IN RETURN.

2. RYKOV IS 53 YEARS OLD, TALL, SLENDER, WITH GRAYING WAVY HAIR. HE SPEAKS 3/3 FRENCH (ALTHOUGH HE USED AN INTERPRETER WHEN INTERVIEWED BY LOCAL PRESS FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF HIS CREDENTIALS JUNE 7). HE SMOKES RATHER HEAVILY AND PROFESSES TO WORRY THAT IT'S DAMAGING HIS HEALTH.

3. RYKOV, QUITE UNLIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, IS A PROFESSIONAL
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DIPLOMAT AND AN AFRICAN EXPERT. HIS FIRST AFRICAN TOUR WAS IN ACCRA DURING KWAME NKRUMAH'S TIME (ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF). HE SPENT THREE YEARS IN CONAKRY IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD, BEGINNING IN 1962. HE SPENT ANOTHER TWO YEARS IN YAOUNDE SOME TIME LATER, PRESUMABLY IN LATE 'SIXTIES. HIS MOST RECENT ASSIGNMENTS HAVE BEEN IN MOSCOW, FIRST IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE'S AFRICAN DIVISION AND MOST RECENTLY

IN ITS PERSONNEL BUREAU.

4. SO FAR, RYKOV FINDS RWANDA PERPLEXINGLY DIFFERENT FROM HIS WEST AFRICAN EXPERIENCES. GHANA AND GUINEA WERE DIFFICULT BUT INTERESTING AND LIVELY; CAMEROON WAS PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE, BOTH IN TERMS OF CLIMATE/PEOPLE AND ITS POLITICAL/ECONOMIC CHARACTER (HE WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY AHIDJO'S STAYING POWER AND HIS ABILITY TO PLAY OFF RIVALS AGAINST EACH OTHER). RWANDANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE SO FAR SEEMED STANDOFFISH AND SUPERFICIAL. HIS FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF PRES HABYARIMANA WERE FAVORABLE -- HE RESPECTS THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS TO BRING GOVT SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE -- BUT HE WAS DISAPPOINTED AT NOT HAVING HAD MORE SUBSTANTIVE AND EXTENSIVE CONVERSATION WITH HIM AT THEIR FIRST MEETING (HABYARIMANA WAS LEAVING FOR PEKING SAME DAY).

5. EVIDENTLY PRESIDENT BRACED RYKOV WITH AN APPEAL FOR DEVELOPMENT AID. RYKOV COMPLAINED THAT RWANDANS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE USSR IS NOT A "RICH COUNTRY" AND CANNOT DOLE OUT LARGE AMOUNTS OF GRANT AID. NOR WERE THERE PRIVATE SOVIET INVESTORS WHO COULD COME IN WITH THEIR OWN INVESTMENT CAPITAL, AS MOST WESTERNERS DO. SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, HE SAID, BELIEVE IN "TWO-WAY" MUTUAL ASSISTANCE, AND THEIR AID TO THIRD WORLD MUST OF NECESSITY BE ON LOAN BASIS. HE ADMITTED THAT LONG-PENDING SOVIET HOSPITAL PROJECT HAD ALREADY

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COME UP, THAT RWANDANS STILL INSISTED HOSPITAL BE BUILT WITH GRANT MONIES, AND THAT EVENTUAL COST OF HOSPITAL HAD PROBABLY TRIPLED SINCE CREDIT WAS FIRST OFFERED IN 1963. (NOTE: WE ALSO LEARNED FROM HEALTH MINISTER SAME DAY THAT RWANDANS HAD REFUSED EARLIER SOVIET DEMAND THAT HOSPITAL BE STAFFED TO PROVIDE EXTENSIVE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES.)

6. AM TOLD RYKOV WE WOULD BE EXPECTED BY RWANDAS TO "COMPETE" IN PROVIDING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE. RYKOV REPLIED THAT USSR REJECTS NOTION OF COMPETING WITH WEST IN THIS SENSE; IT WILL DO WHAT IT CAN AND NO MORE.

7. RYKOV ASKED WHAT WE THOUGHT PRESIDENT'S AIMS WERE IN TRAVELING TO CHINA AND DPRK. WE NOTED FRUITFUL AID TIES TO PEKING AND ASSUMED RWANDANS WOULD BE SEEKING MORE OF SAME. POINTING TO ETHIOPIA AND SHABA EVENTS, HOWEVER, WE ADDED THAT QUESTION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE MIGHT ALSO COME UP. RYKOV HUMPHED WITH DISPLEASURE BUT MADE NO FURTHER COMMENT. WE DID NOT DISCUSS SOVIET/CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN REGION ANY FURTHER.

8. RYKOV IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE. HIS TWO CHILDREN

REMAI IN USSR: ONE (25) IS A PETROLEUM ENGINEER; THE OTHER (19) IS STUDYING AUTO MECHANICS. RYKOV IS WORRIED AT HOW HE WILL FILL UP HIS SPARE TIME IN KIGALI. HE ENJOYS VOLLEYBALL AND SOCCER BUT PLAYS NO TENNIS ("MAYBE NOW'S THE TIME TO LEARN").

9. COMMENT: HARD TO IMAGINE THIS INTELLIGENT, SKILLED, AND EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT BEING SENT TO KIGALI UNLESS SOVIETS WERE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR POSITION HERE OR INTENT UPON IMPROVING IT.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: ADDRESSEES PLEASE PROVIDE ANY AVAILABLE INFO ON RYKOV WHICH MIGHT SHED FURTHER LIGHT FOR US ON HIS MISSION HERE.
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